impact on political stability in Sri Lanka and on the ongoing peace process. We also hope that a way can be urgently found through political dialogue to avoid these adverse consequences."

India's passive role over recent development in Sri Lanka

271. SMT. BIMBA RAIKAR: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have chosen to resort to a passive role over the recent political developments in Sri Lanka;

(b) whether India perceives any fall-out over the Sri Lankan crisis, in terms of influx of refugees from Sri Lanka; and

(c) if so, the contingency plans put in place by India to counter refugee influx from Sri Lanka?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) No. The Government of India expressed concern over the recent political developments and issued a statement on November 4, 2003 as follows: "We are surprised at the sudden political developments in Sri Lanka today. We hope that the situation does not provoke a constitutional crisis, which would impact on political stability in Sri Lanka and on the ongoing peace process. We also hope that a way can be urgently found through political dialogue to avoid these adverse consequences."

The political leadership in Sri Lanka keeps Government of India briefed regularly on the peace process and other developments.

(b) No. Both the President and the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka have expressed their commitment to the Ceasefire Agreement and to negotiations with the LTTE for a solution to the conflict. Therefore, an influx of refugees is not expected.

(c) Does not apply.

Issuance of Visa to Indians by Indonesia

272. SHRI NANA DESHMUKH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Indonesia has suddenly imposed a decision that Indians cannot be issued visas without clearance from Jakarta;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) what steps are being taken by Government to get revoked the new arrangement?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) Yes.

(b) The Indonesian authorities decided in September 2003 to ensure compliance with existing guidelines for the grant of visas to ordinary passport holders for around 20 countries regarded as senstitive for immigration purposes, including India.

(c) The matter has been taken up with the Indonesian Embassy in New Delhi and with the Indonesian authorities in Jakarta, with a view to ensure that there are no difficulties for Indian nationals in obtaining viasas for Indonesia.

Reduction in U.S. Visa

† 273. SHRI RAJIV RANJAN SINGH 'LALAN':
SHRI KAPILSIBAL:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the U.S.A. have made an annual cut in issuing H-l visa from 1.95 lac to 65,000 only;

(b) if so, whether any assessment has been made regarding effects likely to be brought about on Indian Information Technology Industries as a result thereof; and

(c) if so, the assessment made in this regard and the annual number of competent Indian youth expected to get jobs in America?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) Yes. The Amercian Competitiveness and Workforce Improvement Act of 1998 progressively increased the H1B quota for U.S. fiscal years 1999 to 2003. According to that Act, the annual quota was to revert from 195,000 in U.S. fiscal year 2003 to the original level of 65,000 from U.S. fiscal year 2004.

(b) The annual ceiling on H1B visas in the United States is one of the several factors that have a bearing on the India's information technology industry. Improved digital connectivity, technological and

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.